

them their ladies, damsels and children ten or twenty leagues distant, where they thought they could place them in security. . . . These wicked people, without leader and without arms, plundered and burnt all the houses they came to, murdered every gentleman, and violated every lady and damsel they could find. He who committed the most atrocious actions, and such as no human creature would have imagined, was the most applauded. . . . I dare not write the horrible and inconceivable atrocities they did.' ¹ Although the knightly author, when he comes to describe the Peasants' Rising of 1381, is still the same man, filled with all the prejudices of the upper military class, although he very rightly regards the English rebellion as a design against the privileges of that class, he mentions no such abominable outrages, no systematic massacre of the lords of the soil. His silence only bears out the mass of evidence now unearthed from the indictments and trials of that year. The difference corresponds to a difference in the circumstances that gave rise to the two outbreaks. The French peasantry found their miserable condition made still more unendurable by the war; they were made to live the life of beasts, and, like beasts, they turned to bay. The lot of the English peasant, on the other hand, was improving under the influence of economic and social change. It was only the friction caused by that process, the disappointment that it did not go on still faster, the aggravation caused by the attempts of the upper classes to delay it, that caused the rebellion. When, in the reign of Edward the Sixth, a new change in economic conditions brought in new causes of discontent, and resulted in another Peasants' Rising restricted to the area of Norfolk and Suffolk, murder and lynch-law were on that occasion conspicuously absent from Ket's rebel camp.² If the violence of revolutionists is a test of their condition previous to the outbreak, the rebels of '81 stood half way, in point of civilisation and well being, between their descendants of the Tudor period and the Jacques in the age of Poitiers.

But, although there was no general proscription of the upper classes, murder was a most prominent part of the mob-

¹ Froiss., i. caps, clxxix-clxxxii. * Froude, vol. **iv.** chap,